

# Revisiting the Civil War



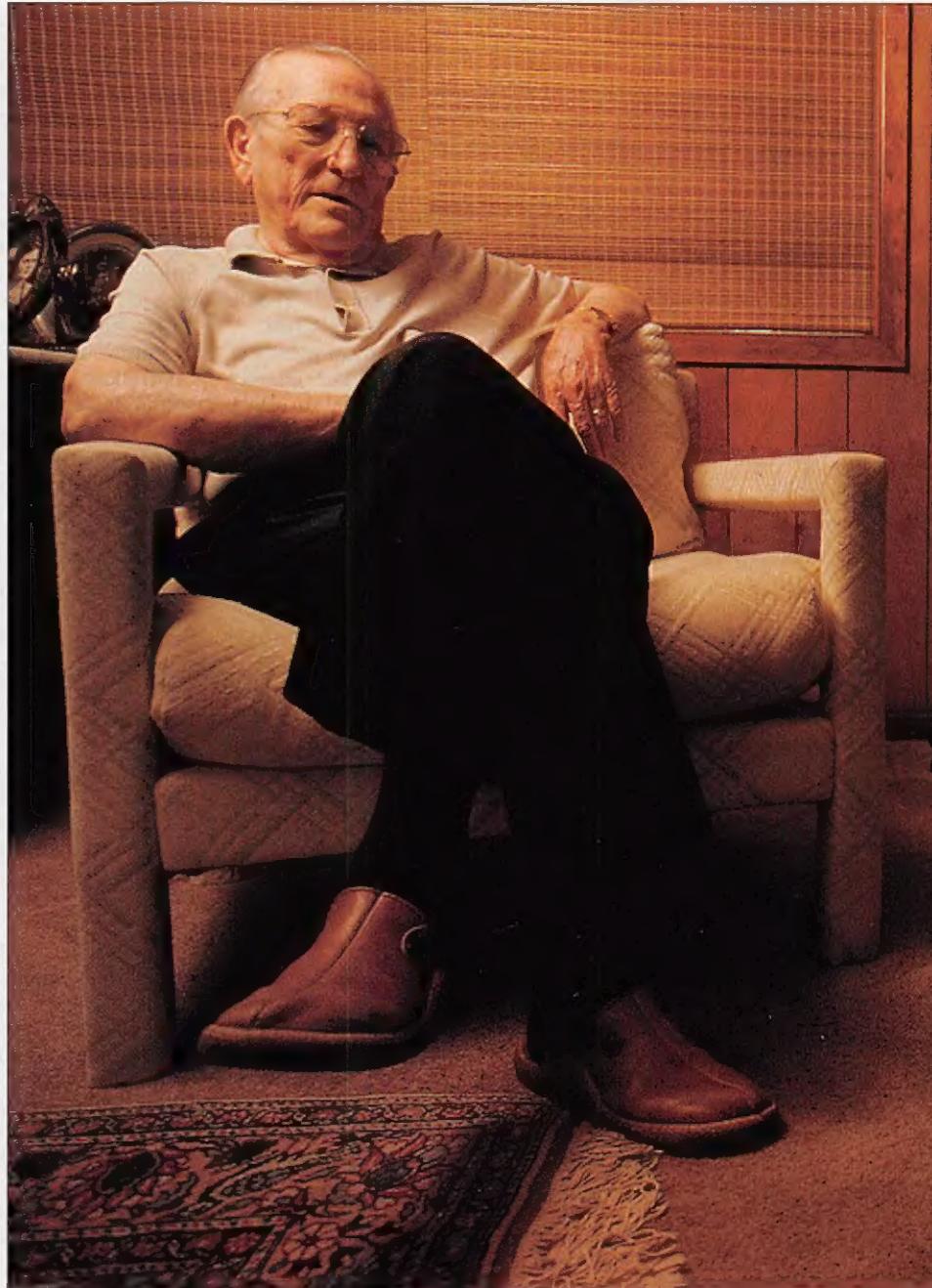
COURTESY THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

A stunning television documentary rekindles enduring passions

**O**h, such a war it was last week, for those who could tear themselves away from the pennant races to watch it. A war that seems to have been fought entirely at daybreak, to the accompaniment of twittering birds and mournful cornets, by cannons picturesquely silhouetted against a red sunrise. A war in which brave men died for principles great enough to found a nation on and simple enough to set to music; a war that freed 4 million slaves and reaffirmed the Union as the world's greatest democracy. Yet a war that turned obscure meadows into killing fields where men died by the tens of thousands and hogs fed on their unburied corpses; a war in which whole cities burned and whole towns of widows wept bitter tears into the next century. The Civil War! To historians, the great watershed event from which all subsequent American history flows. To soldiers, the first war to harness industrial technology for killing, a key step in the evolution of warfare from Napoleon to Patton. To the Sons of Confederate Veterans chapter of Greensboro, N.C. . . . well, to them there was no such thing as the Civil War; the cataclysm of 1861-65 was The War for Southern Independence or The War Between the States. And kept alive in memory despite the galling, inescapable fact that the very money in their pockets proclaims that their side lost.

Fourteen million Americans, more than the entire population of the Confederacy, gave themselves over to "The Civil War"

Fourteen million people, including Jack Joplin, son of a Confederate veteran, surrendered to an 11-hour documentary



# After the Waltz Is Over



**As the R word is once again heard in the land, consumers weigh their risks and search for safety**

The question hovering over the 1980s was, "Are we going to get away with it?" Can we lower taxes, run the spending machine full tilt, damn the deficit and grow rich? For a decade, the answer has been a ringing yes. At a program last March at the University of South Florida, former Treasury secretary Donald Regan declared that there really *are* no budget deficits—that's just how the government keeps its books. And even if deficits do exist, they're good for us. "People don't give the economy enough credit," he complained.

On the contrary, the economy has been given plenty of credit—so much that we're choking on it. The ghastly unwinding of some of those debts—in real estate, junk bonds, banks and S&Ls—suggests a different answer to the question. "No, we're not going to get away with it," concludes Allen Sinai, chief economist of Boston Company Economic Advisors. A recession is probably heading our way, "and even when it passes," he says, "business will not rebound as it did in the past. The growth potential of the United States is roughly half that of Europe and Japan."

Stripped of its press releases, the 1980s now stand as a decade when Americans didn't save, didn't invest, ruined the dollar and ran up a hobbling debt. We brushed off the risks posed by low productivity and poor worker training. Sen. Pat Moynihan got it right: we borrowed \$2.2 trillion and used the money to throw a party. As we clean up the mess, here are some of the costs and opportunities:

**Your job:** "Downsizing," as layoffs are now so soullessly called, will intensify. Textiles, construction and manufacturing, hurt already in 1990, will be socked again in 1991. Also due for a hit: airlines, trucking, newspapers, retailing and government. Asked for some industries that might be immune, Richard Berner, an economist with Salomon Brothers, proposed only health care and oil drilling.

Your personal chances of dodging the bullet depend a lot on where you live. New England crashed a year ago, with no bottom in sight. True recession has also arrived in New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania. The Northeast's decline will not be easily arrested, says Sara Johnson, an analyst for DRI/McGraw-Hill, a forecasting firm in Lexington, Mass. Manufacturers are deserting the region permanently, because of the high cost of doing business there.

Looking west, the Great Lakes states are being dragged down by Michigan's auto-led recession. Tapped-out consumers may also shutter states tied to textiles and appliances—Kentucky, Tennessee, Mississippi, Alabama. But other regions might just squeak by, Johnson thinks—

enduring stagflation but not decline. Their respective props are exports for the Middle West (especially steel and capital goods), oil for the Southwest, population growth for California (the increased need for services may absorb workers who lose their jobs in defense) and, for the Northwest, foreign investments and trade.

**Your spending:** Inflation is hovering between Iraq and a hard place. Even before the attack on Kuwait, consumer prices were pushing up. The annualized inflation rate for the first six months of 1990 came to 5.9 percent—the highest since 1982. Stir in oil, and you're looking at 6.5 to 8 percent, depending on who's forecasting. Average incomes aren't going up that fast, so your standard of living may fall this year (and maybe next year, too). Iraq remains the Doomsday Machine. If its missiles put the Saudi Arabian oilfields out of commission, inflation will soar and economies will totter. In no downturn in recent memory has it been so crucial to hang on to some emergency funds.

**Your savings:** Money-market mutual funds were paying an average of 7.75 percent last week. That's 1.2 points more than you'd get from the average bank money-market deposit account. The highest-rate funds are paying 2 percentage points more. One-year Treasury bills yield 7.7 percent. To me, there are no better ports in a storm.

**Your house:** Housing values should rise with inflation over the long run (say, five to 10 years). But over the short run, a house feels like a lottery ticket. If you have to move, don't buy a new place until you've unloaded the old one, lest you find yourself stuck with two mortgages. What if you take a new job in another city? Install yourself in a rented room until a buyer turns up for your house—even if that means leaving your family behind. It's the lesser misery.

**Your stock investments:** Today's bears are a scary lot. The optimists see further drops of "only" 15 to 25 percent (perhaps another October plunge), then an upturn within a very few months. The pessimists warn of a genuine crash—a further 50 percent drop, lasting through 1992.

For profits, the bears like investments that benefit from the cheaper U.S. dollar, another legacy of the 1980s. Having run up huge deficits in trade, we are now being forced to work them off by exporting more and importing less. A cheaper dollar facilitates that by making American goods more competitive abroad. As a collateral benefit, it adds to the value of the foreign investments that you make.

One popular choice has been mutual funds that buy foreign bonds (up 9.5 percent over the past 12 months). Two such: Fidelity Global Bond and T. Rowe Price International Bond, both recommended by Tyler Jenks of the Boston firm Kanon Bloch Carré. As for stocks, most foreign markets had their tops sliced off by Saddam Hussein. As prices come down, longtime bear Barton Biggs, chief global strategist for Morgan Stanley & Co., says he's starting to get bullish—especially about Germany, Singapore and the Netherlands. Charles Allmen, publisher of the Growth Stock Outlook, makes his dollar plays in American companies with substantial foreign profits (one pick: Clorox).

The flight of American capital abroad is yet another consequence of our total disregard for the buildup of debt. We are hoist on our own platitudes—perhaps none more damaging than the maudling phrase "How awful to be loading all this debt on our grandchildren." In truth, that always sounded like an out. We'd get the little tykes to pay and the bills wouldn't hit for another 40 years.

I've got news. We didn't leave the mess to our grandchildren. We only rolled it over for a few years, at a compounding social and financial cost. The tykes can relax. This is debt that we're going to spend years paying off ourselves.

Associate: VIRGINIA WILSON

last week—a modest television audience by network standards, but a blockbuster for an 11-hour documentary on PBS. For the five nights it was shown, it averaged a rating of just below 9 (and an audience share of 13 to 14 percent) compared with a typical public-television rating of between 2 and 5. Viewers who failed to tape the early broadcasts were already descending on video stores last week, where the series was not to be found; it will be released later by Time-Life. The entire television industry was aghast when Johnny Carson, the national Philistine, praised it on his broadcast Tuesday night. Ultracommercial producer David Wolper ("Roots," "The Thornbirds") said, "I loved it!" and added that it made the

important historical point that "the mini-series is not dead."

Yet by public-television standards, it was an extremely sober documentary, lacking even the animation of a good dung-beetle fight. The producers, Ken Burns and his brother Ric, elected to tell the story almost exclusively through still photographs, maps and paintings, augmented by sound effects of a startling verisimilitude and readings from letters and diaries of the period. Some found the interminable camera pans (*up the legs, past the belt, now the chest . . . OK, here comes the hat*) unbearable; Thomas Schwartz, curator of the Illinois State Historical Library's Lincoln collection, watched the first hour on Sunday

and then switched to a "vastly more entertaining" movie about Leona Helmsley. But others found themselves transfixed by the soldiers, their faces and the voices—the embers of pride still glowing in their eyes after all these years, the quiver of fear echoing in their words down through the decades. Ten thousand actors hurling themselves through the authentic woods of Chancellorsville could not have told the story better—and besides, says Mark Neely, director of the Lincoln Museum in Ft. Wayne, Ind., "modern Civil War re-enactors are much older and fatter than real Civil War soldiers."

Fourteen million Americans: among them, Jack Joplin of Sugar Land, Texas,



GREG SMITH—SIPA



PETER BLAKELY

## KEN BURNS

Producer and director

"We've touched a nerve in the American people," says filmmaker Ken Burns, 37. "If you see history like the life of a human being, this was the traumatic event of our childhood." The half dozen films on his résumé attempt to illuminate the past, but "The Civil War" is the most ambitious effort. His enthusiasm won over skeptics, including Ric Burns, his younger brother and collaborator. When they began, Ric says, "Ken got down on the carpet and began to map out the battle of Gettysburg. In 15 minutes, I was convinced."

Burns is not without critics. "The problem with Ken is he can't stand to share credit," says one historian who has worked with him. Undeterred, Burns is looking ahead to a project on another quintessential American subject, this time a joyous one—the history of baseball.

the 87-year-old son of a Confederate private, and Tricia Serju of Detroit, a 19-year-old sophomore at Wayne State University. What else could they have in common but America? Serju's Jamaican-born mother "watched five minutes and said it had nothing to do with her," the young woman said, "but I'm an American and it has everything to do with me." Also, Heath Meriwether, 46, who grew up in Missouri idolizing Robert E. Lee—not something he

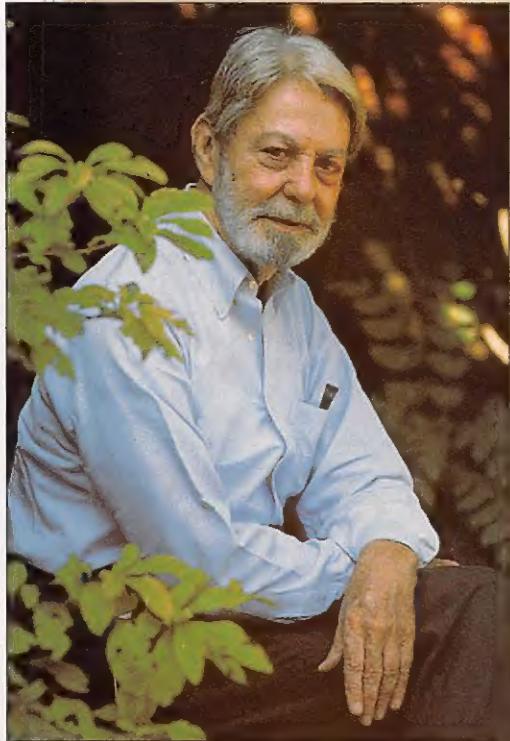
is inclined to boast about now, in his capacity as executive editor of the Detroit Free Press. He regarded the series as a way to explain his taste in heroes to his wife and children. "They're still a bit aghast," he admits, "but now at least they see that Lee was against slavery and secession." Yet for a few, the 19th century is still too close, the emotions of the period too raw. Frances Todd, 59, the great-granddaughter of slaves, refused to watch the broadcast be-

cause, she said, she "couldn't stand to watch a program about people who would fight to hold other people in slavery."

The broadcast made minor celebrities of its two principal historical commentators, Tennessee author Shelby Foote (box) and Columbia University historian Barbara J. Fields (page 61). And it seemed certain to spur popular interest in the Civil War, not that it was ever in danger of flagging. Because the Civil War centennial coincided

## Prime Time's New Star

**T**he face suggests a kindly Confederate colonel, the voice molasses over honey. As Civil War guides go, Shelby Foote seems a casting director's dream. But none of that explains why the 73-year-old writer has, in the twilight of a quiet literary life, suddenly blossomed into the Carl Sagan of historians—an eggheaded, prime-time star. To explain that, you need to look at the mental weaponry that Foote brought to Ken Burns's Civil War saga: enormous expertise, pithiness and wit, a palpable compassion and, infusing it all, the eerie sense that he was somehow *there*. "Getting Shelby Foote for my documentary," says Burns, "was almost as good as getting Bobby Lee."



ROLLIN RIGGS

### SHELBY FOOTE

Author and historian

So why is the man feeling so down? "All this attention has shaken up all my notions of myself," Foote confided at his Memphis home last week. "I feel like I'm swimming in strange waters. Forgive me, but I really don't like it." The intensity of that "it" can be best measured by Foote's time on the telephone. There have been beseeching calls from radio and TV, grateful calls from Civil War enthusiasts and, on occasion, rapturous calls from single women. "They say—it's embarrassing for me to tell you—they say how attractive I am and how they feel the warmth of my nature and, uh, this, that and the other." Foote (who has been married for 34 years) has also gotten calls from "unreconstructed" Southerners. "They ask me," he chuckles, "How could you, a true-born Southerner, get mixed up in this piece of Yankee propaganda?"

How that happened is an epic tale of its own. In 1954, Foote, then the author of five successful novels, accepted a request from Random House to write a "short" history of the Civil War. Twenty years later he completed it: three massive volumes. Though the trilogy was acclaimed, Foote understandably wanted no more of the war. "While I don't regret one minute of those years," he says, "it was like swallowing a cannonball." Then, five years ago, Ken Burns sent Foote a preliminary script of his documentary and asked him to serve as a paid consultant-commentator. "I knew how skilled he was," recalls Foote. "It seemed like something worth doing."

What Foote most liked about Burns was his willingness to excise material of dubious authenticity. In one instance, Foote pointed out to the director that a highly dramatic moment—Lee ordering an advance when all his generals advised a retreat—actually never happened. "Ken dropped it immediately," says Foote. "All historians know that any untruth stains everything around it. I was so glad to see someone in television who also knew that." Nor did Foote shy from exercising his puckish humor. After NEWSWEEK ran a photo of the two of them a few weeks ago, he called Burns to tease: "Gosh, I look like this



Union artillery in the Tennessee fields at Shiloh,

kindly old gent and you look like the grandson who's been shipped home from military school for not getting a regulation haircut."

Foote's own military service brought a far more devastating setback. After seeing combat as an artillery captain in World War II, he was court-martialed for unauthorized use of a government vehicle and kicked out of the Army. So he joined the Marines and was about to head back overseas when the war ended. Foote turned to fiction writing, adopting Faulkner and Proust as his models and setting most of his novels in his home state of Mississippi. While Foote never quite matched his late friend Walker Percy's standing in the Southern literary pantheon, all his fiction was warmly reviewed.

Foote regrets that Burns's Civil War history didn't encompass some of his favorite chapters. Still, he's learned from it: "Seeing the war presented in a different medium by a true genius was illuminating for me." Less knowledgeable viewers, he says, "have become acquainted with the dark underside of the

with the most passionate years of the civil-rights movement, it didn't receive the same Tall-Ships-and-fireworks treatment as, say, the bicentennial of the American Revolution. Consequently, Americans never got the chance to be bored with it. Oxford University Press, which published James McPherson's Pulitzer Prize-winning "Battle Cry of Freedom" in 1988, has no fewer than five Civil War titles either in the stores or soon to be released. They include a



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where almost 25,000 men fell in only two days

American character as well as the good. The Civil War was so damned important because it determined what kind of country we were going to be."

Foote is now working on yet another Mississippi-based novel—and with his usual discipline. Each morning at 8, he settles at a huge oak desk, picks up a vintage dip pen and begins scrawling his minimum daily quota of 500 words. Every now and then, Foote drives the 100 miles from Memphis to the battlefield at Shiloh. It was there that his great-grandfather fought with the Confederate cavalry, witnessing the tail shot off his horse and his saber bent by a bullet. During his own visits, his great-grandson always walks the field's breadth. Once, while researching the battle, he slept the night on its grounds, rose with the sun and hunted up a rifle-size stick. Then Shelby Foote, with a Rebel yell, began charging up hills. "It was," he recalls, "great fun."

HARRY F. WATERS

new collection of essays by McPherson, a professor of American history at Princeton, and an entire book by noted historian Kenneth M. Stampp on what he regards as the crucial prewar year of 1857. "There has never been a revival of interest in the Civil War," says Byron Dobell, recently retired as editor of American Heritage magazine, "because it has never gone away."

Nor, of course, does the controversy it engenders. Historians generally had good things to say about "The Civil War," at least in part because the producers cleverly hired so many of the leading ones as consultants, foreclosing their possible criticism. Most had great fun finding the factual errors, even while conceding that these did not seriously impugn the film's significance. Lincoln was 56 when he was shot, not 54. The Union Army had 1,000 soldiers under the age of 15, not 100,000. Congressman Thaddeus Stevens is incorrectly called a senator. A strong contingent of Midwestern scholars insists that the film exaggerated Ulysses S. Grant's drinking.

**Short shrift:** And needless to say, almost everyone feels his own academic specialty was slighted by the broadcast. The series covered the contributions of black troops to the Union Army and acknowledged the roles of white women such as Clara Barton—although not, certainly, to the satisfaction of experts in those subjects. But what about black women? "From what I can tell, [they] were missing altogether," says Jacqueline Jones, a Wellesley professor and author of a history of black women. Many historians thought the series overlooked the war's social and economic aspects in favor of picturesque panoramas of battle. But then there are divisions even among military specialists. John Y. Simon, executive director of the Ulysses S. Grant Association, believes his man gets short shrift because he spent most of the war in the West, while the series emphasized the Eastern battles, presumably because those were primarily the ones that photographers covered.

Some observers believed the show glorified the war; others, by contrast, thought it dwelt excessively on gore and carnage. All the talk about death might leave the impression that the war wasn't worth the cost, notes Joel H. Silbey, professor of American history at Cornell, "but that's not what the blacks would say." Nor the soldiers: at West Point, there were mutterings about an antiwar subtext to all those piles of bodies and limbs. More parochially, the film reminded West Pointers that the Civil War was not its finest hour. As visiting professor Herman Hattaway points out, although the top commanders on both sides were overwhelmingly graduates of the Army academy, with some exceptions the best commanders were not the ones who had graduated highest in their classes.



JACQUES CHENET—NEWSWEEK

## BARBARA FIELDS

Historian

For many viewers, the most memorable moments in "The Civil War" were the battle scenes. But for Barbara Fields, 43, a Columbia University professor specializing in the history of the South, the Civil War has far less to do with cannons than with social conscience. "For me, the main point is about human freedom and human dignity," says the coauthor of "The Destruction of Slavery." "The battles would not have been important . . . if there was not something at stake of overriding importance."

Fields was one of many historians consulted by Burns in the early days of the project. After taping her interview, Fields says, she had little to do with the filmmakers: "I had no control." She says she was paid only a consulting fee and a small sum for her essay in the companion volume. But because of her new prominence, she's in demand. She will appear in three public-television series, including one on the black regiment featured in the film "Glory." Above all, Fields says, she is an academic. She earned her Ph.D. from Yale, and teaching is her calling. "My job is to convey history to people," she says. "No film, however well done, can ever replace that task."

But, of course, the most important division of opinion on "The Civil War" falls just where one would expect, on the Mason-Dixon line. A film that probably struck most Northern viewers as an essentially neutral and objective account was taken by some white Southerners as an outrageous slander and insult to the memory of their ancestors. "The victors win the history," is the dark assessment of Ludwell H. Johnson III, a historian at Virginia's College of William and Mary. He considered the broadcast another manifestation of the Yankees' inexplicable "Lincoln cult." At the same time, a sub-

stantial minority of Northern scholars, especially blacks, regard "The Civil War" as accurate on the major historical points but subtly undermined by sympathy for the colorful rascals and noble, long-suffering patricians of the Confederacy—the "Lee cult," in other words. "It has a Southern spin," says Jacqueline Jones's husband, Jeffrey Abramson, a professor of politics at Brandeis.

The difference in interpretation is reflected in the show itself, in the unspoken tension between Foote and Fields. The two never appear on camera together, nor are they introduced as representing opposite viewpoints; yet their comments tend inevitably to pull in different directions. Foote, author of a popular three-volume history of the war, is a white Southerner, possessed of a charming drawl and a self-igniting chuckle, a fount of mildly amusing military anecdotes. But he is hardly a Southern firebrand. To a Daughter of the Confederacy like Sarah Dunaway of Atlanta, the signifi-

cance of "The Civil War" is that it shows the desperate need for "more Southern historians." Yet Michael Thelwell, W.E.B. DuBois Professor of African-American Studies at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, finds Foote's very presence utterly infuriating. "Old Shelby Foote," Thelwell sneers, "looks like he should be sitting in front of a Southern courthouse with tobacco juice running down his face." Foote *humanizes* the Southerners; he emphasizes their underdog status, pays tribute to their great leaders and in general distracts from what black historians consider the single salient fact about the South: that it was fighting to preserve slavery. Where is the virtue in Lee's famous courage or loyalty, they ask, when it was put to the service of such monstrous evil?

**Human freedom:** Fields did not inspire the same intense reaction. She is a black woman, pensive, eloquent and austere, photographed in a dramatic sidelight that gives her an almost prophetic cast. Rumors cir-

culated among historians that she was unhappy with the way the broadcast turned out—something she neither confirmed nor denied. "I can't say everything that I want to," she told NEWSWEEK. But she said it "remains to be seen" whether viewers will, through the thunder of cannon and the chuckle of anecdote, understand her main point: that the Civil War, which the North undertook to preserve the Union, was transformed into something far more important, a struggle for human freedom. Only after the two purposes fused in the Emancipation Proclamation were all those battles worth fighting.

Well, many white Southerners understood what she was saying. And it is exactly what the extreme Southern critics of "The Civil War" refuse to concede: that the war was about slavery as a concrete proposition, rather than an abstract disagreement about "states' rights" that just happened to involve slavery. "The cause [of the war] was secession," declares Charles Lunsford,

## Avoiding Gridlock at Gettysburg



WALLY McNAMEE—NEWSWEEK

Cannons are silent in Manassas, Va., the place one soldier called 'the very vortex of hell'

**A** flanking maneuver might work at Manassas, a predawn approach could bring success at Shiloh—but how do you find a parking space at Antietam? Tourism is hell under any circumstances, but now Americans, whipped into a frenzy of Civil War interest by the PBS series, appear to be massing for an assault on the battlefields. Officials at the National Park Service, which administers

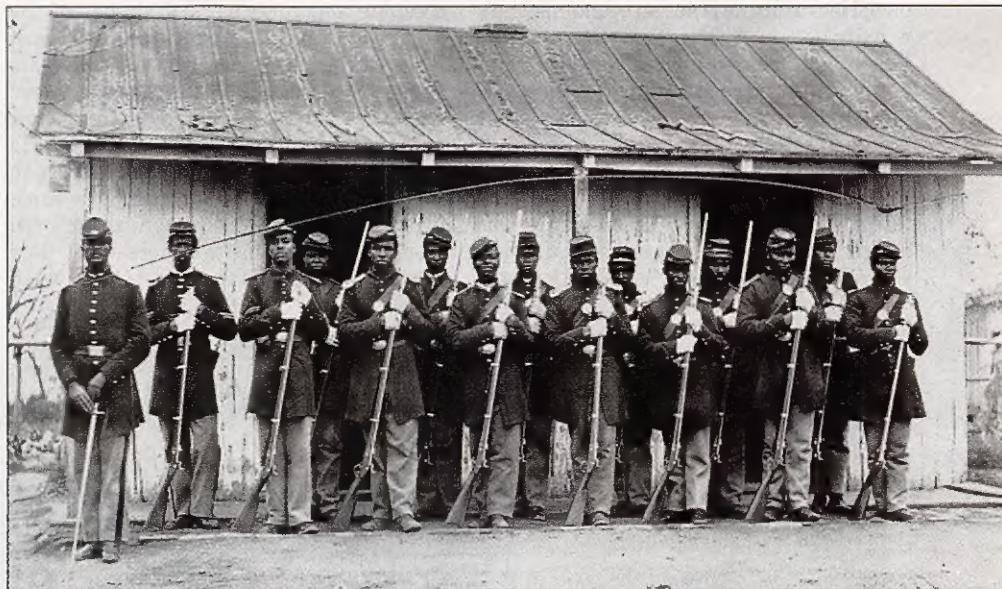
25 of the most significant sites, have already noted an increase in visitors and inquiries: a sign that many camcorder-carrying Mathew-Brady-wanna-bes are on their way. People considering such a trip would do well to emulate General McClellan's propensity for planning and nurturing the troops' morale. A Dodge Caravan divided against itself, after all, cannot fail to miss morning at Appomattox—and wind up in Gettysburg gridlock.

Experiencing the Civil War doesn't need to be a nightmare. Some key sites involve vast tracts of land, capable of handling thousands of visitors without threatening the contemplative atmosphere. The advent of unusually large crowds could even be *good* news if it focuses attention on the effort to preserve the sites, about 100 of which are controlled by government agencies or private nonprofit owners. "You would be hard pressed to find a battlefield in the Eastern theater that does not have serious encroachment problems by residential or commercial development," says Bruce Craig of the National Parks and Conservation Foundation. Some have already been lost. Salem Church, near Fredericksburg, Va., is surrounded by shopping centers. And last week the Culpeper, Va., County Board of Supervisors approved plans for an industrial park at Brandy Station, the site of the war's largest cavalry battle.

Keeping people from combing the fields for the bullets and bones that still turn up occasionally—that part of preservation has been relatively easy. Dealing with encroaching civilization is something else again. In 1988, when a developer tried to build on more than 500 acres adjoining Manassas, the federal government solved the problem by buying the land—for \$100 million. A less expensive approach is now being debated. One option is Interior Secretary Manuel Lujan's American Battlefield Protection Plan, which stresses creative financing and compro-

spokesman for the Sons of Confederate Veterans, "and the cause of secession could have been any number of things. This overemphasis on the slavery issue really rankles us." McPherson is familiar with this point of view; Southerners, he said, find it "embarrassing" to acknowledge that the Confederacy was created to perpetuate human slavery. He has heard some angry responses to "The Civil War" from what he calls "the lunatic fringe." He adds, though, that on this topic, among Southerners, "the lunatic fringe is quite large."

For many ordinary white Southerners, the Civil War has an immediacy and reality that citizens in other parts of the country just don't share, points out Walter Edgar, director of the Institute for Southern Studies at the University of South Carolina. (Edgar, as it happens, considers the TV series "superb.") Thus Dennis Hechtthorne of Houston offers a scholarly refutation of the thesis of "The Civil War," demonstrating that slavery was declining on its



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**Provost Guard members of the 107th Colored Infantry stand ready to defend Washington**

mises with real-estate interests and which has won approval from some conservation groups. An alternative House plan would create a Civil War Sites Advisory Commission, some of whose members would be appointed by Congress; a vote could come this week.

While that battle rages, the parks are bracing themselves for the first wave of newly converted Civil War buffs. What follows is a brief guide to the most popular sites, based in part on the recommendations of the National Park Service's chief historian, Edwin Bearss.

\* The Fort Sumter National Monument, in Charleston, S.C. The South fired the first shot here, on April 12, 1861. Union shelling eventually reduced the fort to rubble. Several areas have been rebuilt: the enlisted men's barracks, officers' quarters and esplanade. Open daily. Admission free—but there is an \$8 ferry charge. (803) 883-3123.

\* Manassas National Battlefield Park, Ma-

nassas, Va. One soldier called this "the very vortex of hell": about 25,000 died here in two battles. The park includes 20 miles of equestrian trails (bring your own horse) and 30 miles of walking trails. Visitors can take a driving tour. Open daily. Admission \$1 for ages 17-61; others free. (703) 754-7107.

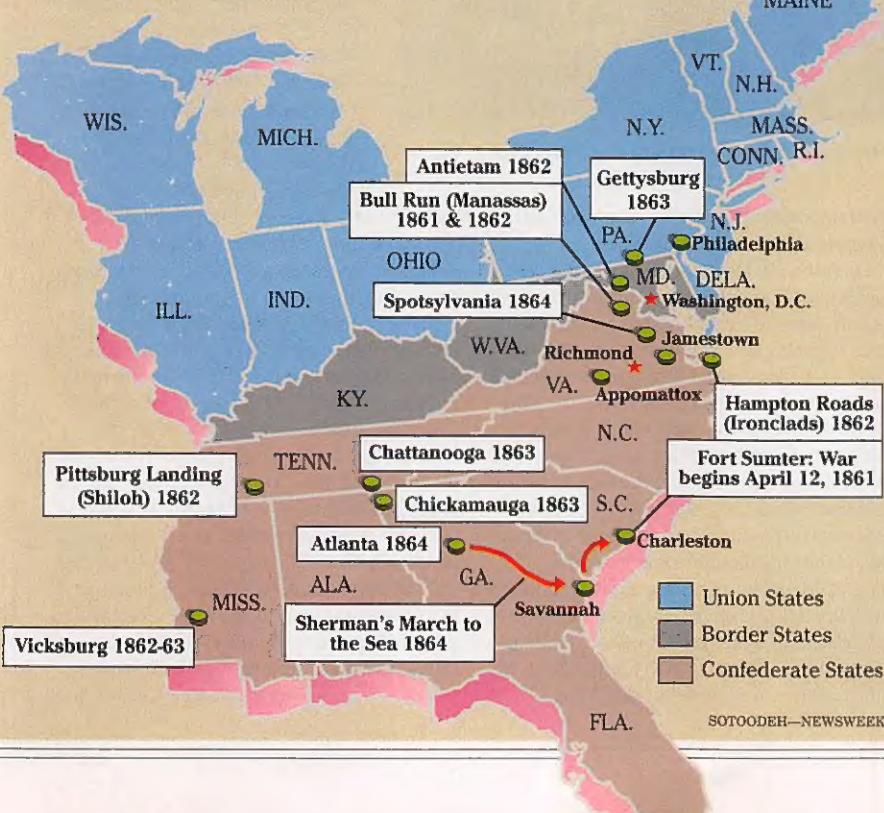
\* Shiloh National Military Park, Hardin County, Tenn. About 24,740 men fell here April 6-7, 1862. The most pristine of the battlefield parks has rolling terrain and offers vistas of the Tennessee River. The visitor center features exhibits on the common soldier. Open daily. Admission, as above. (901) 689-5275.

\* Antietam National Battlefield and Cemetery, Sharpsburg, Md. Commemorating the bloodiest single day of the war (Sept. 17, 1862), it is "synonymous with horror," says Bearss. The visitor center features a 26-minute film on the battle; an elevated observation room offers a good view. Closed on major holidays. Admission, as above. (301) 432-5124.

\* Vicksburg National Military Park, Vicksburg, Miss. Grant launched a series of operations to capture this city. The park commemorates several of the battles and features a restored Union ironclad, the USS Cairo. Open daily. Admission, as above. (601) 636-0583.

\* Gettysburg National Military Park and Cemetery, Gettysburg, Pa. Site of the victory that repulsed Lee's second attempt at invading the North. The park features a three-hour auto tour that includes the spot where Lincoln delivered his address. The most visited battlefield—and the most commercialized. Open daily. Admission free. Avoid tacky electrified map and Cyclorama painting, for which there is a charge. (717) 334-1124.

CHARLES LEERHSEN with MARK MILLER



own; Heckathorne is not an economist, he's a hairdresser. Althea Newman of Folly Beach, S.C., complained to her local PBS outlet that the broadcast focused on starving Union prisoners in Andersonville but ignored equally terrible conditions in Northern POW camps. Newman is a self-service-laundry owner, not a history professor. The question of prison camps was raised by many Southerners, and McPherson acknowledges it as "one of the most

complex and controversial" issues of the war. Conditions were bad in all prisons, he says, but the death rate at Andersonville—28 percent of all the men who were ever there—was "higher by a significant amount than at any Northern prison." He adds what Southern apologists neglect to mention: that all prison camps became overcrowded in 1864 when the North stopped exchanging prisoners—and they stopped because Confederate troops were

murdering surrendered black soldiers.

But surely that is not the last word on the subject; there never is a last word on the Civil War. We live eternally in its shadow, as well as its light—all of us, white and black, North and South. Gettysburg. Chickamauga Creek. Appomattox. The names resound like rifle shots at dawn.

JERRY ADLER with MICHAEL MASON in Atlanta, PETER ANNIN in Houston, DEBRA ROSENBERG in Boston, LOUIS AGUILAR in Detroit, LYDIA DENWORTH and FARAH CHIDEYA in New York

## The Civil War and Modern Memory

**W**hen George Bush took ABC's "Prime Time Live" on a tour of the White House last year, he paused at a favorite painting of Lincoln and his generals. Diane Sawyer asked if he believed the presidency was "splendid misery." "Well, I haven't been tested by fire," he replied. "Abraham Lincoln had the goal of holding the union, keep[ing] brother from killing brother. I mean, it was tough."

Tested by fire. Bush may lack the eloquence of a Civil War private, but he got the basic idea across. Presidents love the Civil War. As the quintessential American conflict, it is connected in both profound and pompous ways to the major conflicts they face, even those that stop short of combat. Recall the image of Richard Nixon during Watergate, stalking the halls, talking to Lincoln's portrait. Nationhood, growth, the wounds of race and class—these make up the war's legacy. But it's to that moment of testing that Americans, especially American men, so often respond when they think of the Civil War. Would I fight? Would I die? Would I measure up? While Saudi Arabia is not Shiloh—at least not yet—the threads that connect them may be one reason so many people were drawn to the PBS series.

Those ties that bind us to the Civil War are astonishingly short. In the final episode, scores of Gettysburg veterans gather in 1938 on the 75th anniversary of the battle. 1938. It looks like a home movie of grandpa, and for thousands of people still living today, it could be. One generation separates them from the war. Former secretary of State Dean Rusk recalls in his recently published memoirs that both of his grandfathers fought for the Confederacy. Rusk, a World War II vet,



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Confederate dead lie in the trenches at Petersburg, Va.

went on to help plan the Korean War and the Vietnam War, the line unbroken.

Even the civilians connect. Among certain baby boomers, it's now trendy to regret not having one's manhood tested in war. Like so much else in their experience, this idea is hardly original. Philosopher William James's turn-of-the-century notion of "the moral equivalent of war," which Jimmy Carter adopted during the energy crisis, was born of regret over losing the focused commitment of the Civil War years. College athletics flowered afterward as a way of recapturing that spirit. According to a new biography of Henry Stimson, the legendary presidential adviser fervently wished he had been born early enough for the Civil War. Stimson has a direct line to George Bush: he influenced him at Andover and Yale.

The theme runs most clearly in the life of Theodore Roosevelt, a Bush favorite, who as a small boy witnessed Lincoln's funeral procession. "The deepest root of Roosevelt's compulsive, often frenetic militarism lay in his father's having failed to answer his most important challenge in 'the great battle of life'—he had not fought in the Civil War," writes historian John Milton Cooper Jr. Theodore Sr. hired a substitute. Today, that's not necessary; sons of the powerful rarely serve or die. Roosevelt fought in the Spanish-American War, but he always regretted that his peacetime presidency did not test him.

Unfortunately for manhood and valor, they come into conflict with another value, which has consistently prevailed. Life. Since the Civil War, the United States has never relied on a strategy of limitless casualties. "In the 20th Century, resistance to casualties has been the single

most important factor in the United States' approach to war," notes historian Alan Brinkley. American deaths have always been fewer than those of other combatants.

"Military history," said Gen. William Tecumseh Sherman, "is to die in battle and have your name spelled wrong in the newspapers." Lt. Col. Tom Walsh, chief of the American-history department at West Point, might demur, but he knows the unpredictability of war. "You have to ask yourself at the beginning, 'How rational is it to get in? How much do you want to win?'" He brings up the Middle East. "Maybe the [Civil War] series will get people to ask that question earlier. We Americans tend to ask it late." Victory or defeat, just or unjust, there's rarely anything "splendid" about all of the misery.

JONATHAN ALTER with LUCILLE BRACHY